

between paragraphs [0002] and [0003] insert the following:

[0002.5] Brief Description Of The Prior Art

Page 2, replace paragraph [0004] with the following amended paragraph:

[0004] Such piezoelectric actuators can be provided for instance for driving switching valves in fuel injection systems of motor vehicles. In operation of the piezoelectric actuator, care must be taken in particular to assure that mechanical stresses in the layer construction not cause any problematic development of cracks in the region of the outer or connection electrodes. Since the inner electrodes, each contacted on one side, are integrated in comblike fashion with the layer structure, the successive electrodes in the direction of the layer structure must each be contacted on opposite sides in alternation.

replace paragraph [0005] with the following amended paragraph:

[0005] Upon an actuation of the piezoelectric actuator, that is, when a voltage is applied between the opposed inner electrodes in the layer structure, different mechanical forces occur in the region of the inner electrodes and in the region of the contacts on the outer electrodes, and these can cause mechanical stresses and hence cracks in the outer electrodes. The outer electrodes must then in turn be provided with connection electrodes, which as a rule must also withstand mechanical stresses.

Page 3, replace paragraph [0006] with the following amended paragraph:

[0006] SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

replace paragraph [0007] with the following amended paragraph:

[0007] The piezoelectric actuator according to the invention, which can for instance be used to actuate a mechanical component, is advantageously embodied in such a way that at least one layer of the applicable outer electrode is constructed in network-or fabric-like fashion, distributed each over a respective side face, and is contacted at least at some points with the applicable inner electrodes. The network-or fabric-like outer electrodes are lengthened beyond the multilayer structure of piezoelectric layers in such a way that at the extensions, the delivery of the electrical voltage takes place via suitable terminals.

Page 5, replace paragraph [0013] with the following amended paragraph:

[0013] These and other characteristics of preferred refinements of the invention can be learned from the description and the drawings; the individual characteristics can each be realized on their own or multiple characteristics can be realized in the form of subsidiary combinations both in the embodiment of the invention and in other fields and can represent both advantageous and intrinsically patentable embodiments for which patent protection is here claimed.

Page 6, replace paragraph [0014] with the following amended paragraph:

[0014] BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

replace paragraph [0015] with the following amended paragraph:

[0015] Exemplary embodiments of the piezoelectric actuator of the invention will be explained in detail herein below, in conjunction with the drawings, in which:

replace paragraph [0016] with the following amended paragraph:

[0016] Fig. 1 is a section through a piezoelectric actuator with a multilayer structure of layers of piezoceramic and inner electrodes, as well as a netlike outer electrode lengthened by a foot part;

Page 8, replace paragraph [0025] with the following amended paragraph:

[0025] DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Page 10, after paragraph [0030] insert the following new paragraph:

[0031] The foregoing relates to preferred exemplary embodiments of the invention, it being understood that other variants and embodiments thereof are possible within the spirit and scope of the invention, the latter being defined by the appended claims.

Page 11, line 1, delete "Claims" and insert --"We Claim"--.